

3, 1895, was begun in January, 1896, by Mr. Wm. A. Carlyle, Ma. E., Provincial Mineralogist, and Mr. Herbert Carmichael, Assayer and Chemist, a proposed plan of operations was drawn up. The ground to be covered by that part of the Bureau more particularly in the charge of the latter official was included in the following:

"To maintain a laboratory for assay and chemical analysis, for which will be charged the customary fees, and to determine, free of cost, specimens of rock, mineral or ore that may be sent in, and give all possible information concerning the occurrence or probable commercial value of such, with hints concerning the best methods of treatment, etc., etc.

"To maintain student laboratories, for instruction in assaying, blow-piping, mineralogy, geology, etc.

"To assemble and systematically arrange in a public museum specimens of mineral, ore, country rock, building and other economical mineral materials from the mines; and also, for comparative study, specimens of the same from other mining countries, models, maps, etc.

"To establish and equip a plant for testing, metallurgically, the different kinds of ore, coal, coke, etc., etc."

This month we publish two contributions relating to the Assay Laboratories and Mineral Museum, respectively. It is interesting to note that the plan of operations, as stated above, has in the main been faithfully adhered to and successfully carried out, and we take pleasure in directing attention to this fact. It would appear, though, that there is room for more active co-operation on the part of the mining districts of the Province, and we have no doubt that the Department of Mines would cordially welcome such assistance in, and appreciation of, the work of practical usefulness it is endeavouring to carry out in the manner indicated.

From several quarters, perhaps not always unprejudiced or disinterested, dissatisfaction has been expressed at the not too favourable views set out by the Provincial Mineralogist in his recently published report on the oil fields of the Flathead Valley; and it is true that compared with the opinions held by the late Dr. Selwyn when head of the Geological Survey of Canada regarding the potentialities of the district in respect to its mineral oil resources, Mr. Robertson's statements appear to err somewhat on the side of over-cautiousness. Thus it is somewhat difficult to understand on what grounds the Provincial Mineralogist based his suggestion that "oil in quantity, if it does exist, must in all probability be at a very considerable depth, possibly over 3,000 feet." Of course if there is actual evidence of this fact it were well that the public should be so informed, as it is questionable whether undertakings could be profitably conducted in this field if boring must be carried on to so great a depth. But if on the other

hand a mere theory is advanced, the statement is likely to have a deterrent effect on enterprise, which it is the province of the Department of Mines to encourage. Even the most able of geologists, it must be remembered, are not always infallible, and one has only to instance their mistaken views some years back concerning the gold-occurrences on the Rand, while we have other examples much nearer home. Now that the Government has withdrawn the reserve from these East Kootenay lands, important developments in this new territory may be hopefully looked for. The successful establishment of an oil industry in British Columbia is certainly a desideratum, for it would undoubtedly attract much capital to the Province for investment not only in that but in other industries.

Apropos, a correspondent of the *Fort Steele Prospector*, a Mr. Michael Phillipps writes as follows: The report of the Provincial Mineralogist on the oil fields of the Flathead is in many ways misleading, and because Mr. Robertson, a stranger in a wild country, failed to find more than the oil seepages on the much staked off Kish-e-neh-na and Sage Creeks, he at once concludes that they are the only ones known. He reports too that he failed to find oil in a spot where Professor Selwyn found it. There is one place near this latter point where by hollowing out the shale a basin is formed that at once fills with a clear straw-colored crude oil. The boulders on many of the creeks are saturated with oil, showing how very large must be the entire seepage of oil in the vicinity of these two creeks, and in some other adjacent ridges in the section of the Flathead Valley north of the Boundary. I first visited the oil seepage in 1872. It had been known to the Indians for years before that time. The mistakes Mr. Robertson made in getting into the Flathead Valley show how necessary a guide is. Mr. Robertson describes the route he followed as the blazes of Mr. Ritchie, who knew less of the country than Mr. Robertson. Had Mr. Robertson gone a little to the south he would have reached the Flathead Valley without going over a mountain, in place of the 7,000-ft. ridge he went over. A low pass is also mentioned and shown on the map where no pass exists. Moose Creek, a large tributary of Wigwam River, about the spot shown, heads in a large basin with high precipitous and impassable mountains to the exit."

Some very interesting expert evidence has already been given in the course of the trial now in progress at Nelson arising from the claims for damages on the part of relatives and others of those killed or injured in the explosion at the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company's Fernie colliery, some two years ago. Thus one of the witnesses for the defence, Mr. Ashworth, a well known English coal mining engineer, in refutation of the expert testimony offered by Mr. William Blakemore positively asserted the explosion resulted not from dust as perhaps generally surmised but from the ignition of gas. He stated that at the time of the